**ARI PLU Assignment Two: First Article**

**“What Are Formative Assessments and**

**Why Should We Use Them”**

“25 Quick Formative Assessments for a Differentiated Classroom,

2008, <http://www.scholatic.com/professional>, (Sept. 2010).

**By**

**Judith Dodge**

**3-2-1**

**3 Important Details**

**1. ”Stiggins, 2007, urges teachers to focus more on assessment for learning. These types of assessment, formative—assessments, support learning during the learning process.” Who would have ever thought that assessments could be used as a learning tool? This is a huge step forward and would cause one to chunk learning in plausible sizes to assess what students understand. I like this.**

**2. I, too, have often heard teachers fear they will sacrifice content if they assess students along the way in their learning journeys. My question would be, ‘Can you afford not to assess along the way?’ I love the statement on page 2, “Yet in the rush to cover more, students are actually learning less.” As adults we have learned the importance of reflection. Should we not give students the same opportunity to reflect as they learn?**

**3. The exit cards are very powerful. How simple is it to have students write on a sticky note or index card to let you know how they have solved a problem, summarized their learning, or responded to a thought provoking question that may have been asked? This feedback leads to a flexible, pliable group that can be formed and reformed each day, possibly several times during the day, depending on student needs.**

**2 Connections to My Leadership Role**

1. **Connections are one of my favorite things to make. I love to connect the dots. Helping teachers connect the dots is even more fun. We have been gathering multiple sources of data for years. Some data has been easy to understand and analyze. Other sources of data are a little more tedious. Whether easy or tedious, this data becomes signposts guiding the way for individual and group growth. I can help teachers and even students learn that formative assessments in many forms will help them become better practitioners and learners. As the knowledge is shared and the tool box grows with great strategies and ideas, all will come to understand why formative assessments are valuable.**
2. **The connection to RTI was good news. In the article RTI is referred to as Response to Intervention. I personally like Response to Instruction. This keeps the teacher in the equation for the group as a whole allowing the tiers to take shape as needed. RTI focused on the struggling student. I like to see RTI embed not only the struggling student, but the creative, gifted student as well. As practitioners, we have a tendency to focus so much energy on the struggling student; we are exhausted when it comes time to help those whose learning is often off our charts. Effective classroom instruction should touch every student.**

**1 Question**

* **I agree with any and all who question “buy in” and “ownership” of these ideas. My question would be, “How can I encourage practitioners that more coverage of content is really less learning and less coverage is really more as long as reflection is part of the process?”**

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**ARI PLU Assignment Two: Second Article**

**“Assessment for Learning:**

**A Key to Motivation and Achievement”**

**By**

**Rick Stiggins**

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**3 Important Details**

**After reading the article Assessment “for” Learning, I took away more than three important details, but for your sake and that of others who may read this, I will keep it to just that, three important details.**

**My first detail centers around the idea that this article promotes a change process that can only occur when pre-service teachers and current practitioners are given the professional development that has to occur to implement the change from status quo assessments to day by day assessments for learning. Teachers need to learn more about formative assessments.**

**My second detail centers around a thought that I have often had since I went to and have studied periodically the information from “Children of the Code”** [**http://www.childrenofthecode.org/**](http://www.childrenofthecode.org/%20)**. Students who are shamed by their low achievements based on the inability to read at the levels necessary for upper level content in high school and college is staggering. The “Key to Motivation and Achievement” is connecting the dots between teacher/student/parent/community. It appears that what I have often thought is about to transpire; each student will basically have their own individualized educational plan using formative assessments to drive their educational process and results. “The important lesson is that the student’s emotional reactions to assessment results will determine what the student thinks, feels, and is motivated to do in response to those results.” (p. 16)**

**The third detail that I find interesting in this article is the fact that the “student” becomes the determining factor in most decisions made by all parties involved. The rubrics center on “student friendly language” and “family friendly language”. The assessments are based on the outcomes by individual students. Teachers will need to become good at taking anecdotal records called “descriptive feedback” (pg14) to assess ‘next steps’ in student learning. Dr. Stiggins writes that “the most dependable assessment in the world cannot be regarded as high quality if it has a counterproductive effect on learning or on students” (pg. 6). It appears to me that he believes the student is the most important factor involved in the learning process. Without the student, there is no process of learning, so why wouldn’t the systems of education make the student the center of all discussions and decisions. And, if the student is the primary factor, why does the student continue to be left out of the equations of decision making, even at the elementary level?**

**Connections to My Leadership Role**

1. **I need to learn how to help teachers take good anecdotal records (written descriptive feedback). If I can help in that area, then from what I have read, I will be helping students on a day to day basis. As a reading coach I can practice writing descriptive feedback when I am working with teachers within the coaching cycle. Teaching and coaching is not a ‘gotcha’ experience. It is truly supportive and guiding role that is ever evolving.**
2. **As a reading coach, I am by default a leader in the area of reading and many look to me for answers. I don’t always have the answers. I need access to more articles of this nature to help teachers be aware of the research that provides ‘next steps’ for teachers when they need to know in which direction to focus their attention.**

**Question**

**I am a little troubled by this article. I need to spend more time on its content. I do not agree with outcome based education and I see hints of this in standards-based education. However, there are many salient points that teachers could use to make teaching and learning more powerful and interesting for all students.**

**Dr. Stiggins does not appear to agree with any kind of rank ordering of students (pg 13). I do not believe that all students are ‘engineered’ with the same gifts and talents, nor the same way of learning nor the same abilities to access, store, and use knowledge. I do agree with him that the emotional damage instructors inadvertently or intentionally do to students is incorrigible. Rank ordering? I need to think about this some more.**

**Having written all this, my question is, how do we take the key points of what he has written and help instructors gain insight into teaching and learning to have the highest impact and effect on learning for students?**